

CWP21 g. 38/64

(Verse)

26. June 1795.

PETITION
WRITERS CLERKS & APPRENTICES.

Parties Agents.

S. Clerk.

Encl. in ESTC

UNTO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
The Lords of Council and Session,

THE
P E T I T I O N

OF

The CLERKS and APPRENTICES of WRITERS to the
SIGNET, and WRITERS in Edinburgh;

Humbly Sheweth,

THAT your petitioners, with much regret,
Take up your Lordships time, their ills to state;
But, conscious that your Lordships succour lend,
The sad to comfort, and the poor befriend,
We've dar'd, with boldness, to reveal our grief,
And from your Lordships justice, hope relief.

We've

We've struggled long chill penury to hide ;
 But now, necessity o'ercomes our pride.
 Tho' modesty conceal'd our pressing need,
 Our hollow stomachs would cry out for bread.
 And sure this humble prayer's more grateful far,
 Than empty founds of hunger at your bar.

Without poetic ornament or fiction,
 We'll shortly state our case to your conviction.

Your Lordships know, 'tis ours to copy pages,
 For each of which, poor two-pence is our wages ;
 And that, in this unprofitable way,
 We're scarce employed a fourth part of the day :
 Most of our Masters thinking it quite fair,
 To keep three extra clerks, to—live on air.
 Tho' they themselves could finish every line,
 They must have clerks—for what?—to cut a *shine*.
 Our other time, like chairmen, we must spend,
 So many messages our masters send ;
 In borrowing processes, and craving debtors,
 Taking down rolls, and passing signet letters,
 And trudging idly thro' the Outer House,
 We spend our time, or rather time abuse.
 How many a Writer's Clerk attends this Court,
 Without one cause, his spirits to support !
 Yet see with how much cheerfulness he walks,
 And over knotty points majestic talks !
 Then sudden starts, as if awoke from slumber,
 Runs to the Macer, and cries—What's the number ?
 Altho' with that, he has no more to do,
 Than if he were a miner at Peru.

Full



Full many a tedious year has past away
 Since Writers Clerks have got increase of pay ;
 And e'en this ill we might with patience bear,
 Had not each necessary grown so dear.

A Writer's Clerk full fifty years ago,
 On thirty pounds a-year could be a beau ;
 But now, on that same sum we scarce can hide
 Our naked skin, and meat and drink provide.
 Tradesmen of all descriptions raise their wages,
 Why, therefore, no increase for copying pages ?
 If we're employed to copy any paper ;
 For instance, to a hosier or a draper ;
 Our charge is, truly, not a farthing more,
 Than what it was a century before :
 But, if we need a hat, a coat, or stocking,
 (With great submission, is it not provoking ?)
 Our draper says he cannot sell them under,
 Five times the price they cost in 1700.

We groan beneath a sad yet just taxation,
 From which there's little hope of extrication.
 But, as we're eager to support this squabble,
 Against that vile licentious Gallic rabble,
 We'll pay the taxes, while we have a groat,
 Whether your Lordships grant our prayer or not.
 But one late tax afflicts us to the heart,
 Because we cannot with a guinea part ;
 When powder'd, we were decent looking fellows,
 But now, resemble Blacksmiths at their bellows.

We're

We're pointed out (our very souls it racks)
As Writers Clerks, who can't afford the tax.

While other tradesmen join in combinations,
To raise their wages, or desert their stations,
To aid our plea, truth, justice, sense refin'd,
Are in your Lordships gen'rous breasts combin'd.

*In order all these hardships to prevent,
May't therefore please your Lordships to augment
The price of pages to a penny more,
Than the low rate, at which they were before;
And your petitioners shall pray sincere,
That you may live and judge ten thousand year.*

*Mr. John Gwynne
Writer
Glasgow*

